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## THE PLACE OF THE CLASSICS IN OUR SCHOOLS<sup>1</sup>

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Elementary education has one imperative goal, that of helping the child to get his growth. In childhood, educational processes must be brought to bear in such a way that the boy may come naturally and as completely as possible to the fullness of his physical, moral, mental, and spiritual stature. It is concerned not so much with what the boy is to do when he becomes a man as it is with the kind of man he is to be. The decision as to the work to which his powers are to be devoted may be postponed for a little in order that the nature and extent of his capacity may be disclosed.

But a little later, and especially in the colleges and technical schools, another goal is set. Here education must help the youth to find the kind of service for which he is best adapted and train him for that service.

In secondary education, there exist side by side these two most important and interesting phases of education, because there is still the need of considering the developing nature of the individual while there begins to appear the necessity of helping him to find his work. The process of development or growth is still incomplete, but the problem of the service to be rendered by the individual cannot remain untouched.

Because these two important issues of education thus meet in the secondary school, it becomes necessary to examine and challenge every subject in the secondary school curriculum with reference to its value both as a means of development and as a specific tool. Herein lies the reason for much of the controversy regarding educational values of secondary school subjects. If it is maintained that a subject has value as an aid to personal devel-

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Third Annual Meeting of the American Classical League, Boston, July 3, 1922.

opment, someone is certain to raise the question, "Of what use is it?" On the other hand, if the subject is alleged to do what our pedagogical vocabulary calls "functioning in life," then the question is certain to be raised as to whether the boy is not being deprived of important elements of culture.

Moreover, not only must all education have a primary care for the individual and his needs, but it must likewise have a care for the interests of the whole body. These, of course, are not antagonistic. What in any serious and effective fashion serves the individual will likewise serve the group.

Let it be said that one of the most important aims of education is that of helping each generation to garner and pass on for the use and enjoyment of each succeeding generation those things which study and experience have proven of value in the lives of men and in the development of civilization.

So that the question of the place of the Classics in secondary education must be answered in the light of the value of the Classics in helping the individual youth to his best development; of their importance in making a contribution to his efficiency as a worker in a specific field, and of the contribution which education must make through the individual to the group in the preservation of values.

On the following three points, therefore, I would contend for the value of the Classics. First, as a means of education, it has been demonstrated beyond possibility of doubt that those subjects which help in expression are of greatest value. While realizing that language represents only one mode of expression, I believe that throughout our school program there is the greatest need of more thorough-going instruction in the language arts. I shall spend no time in defense of the proposition that our own language should be more thoroughly taught. The theory that English is now so well taught or that it can be so well taught in the elementary schools as to make necessary only slight attention to it in the higher schools is utterly unsound. Both the secondary schools and especially the colleges are today neglecting the plainest of plain duties in failing to make more insistent requirements in the matter of English in all its phases, construction, composition, ap-

preciation, and literary content. Beyond this, however, I would contend that a knowledge of the English language cannot be perfected unless the learner has in some measure brought to its aid the study of a second language. The advantages of general language study should not be held the right and privilege of an exclusive few. For all normal American youth within the upper elementary and the secondary period, provision should be made for the study of at least one year of Latin and of a modern language other than English if for no other reason than that of a more complete understanding and appreciation of the native tongue.

Again, it must not be forgotten that there are large numbers of our youth who must find through the medium of the Classics their approach to the fields of activity in which they will be most efficient. It is distinctly unfair to those youth who are to enter upon certain vocations that they should be sent by the short cuts which may, to be sure, bring them earlier to the goal of vocational recognition but will do so to their great handicap and loss because of the failure to provide a complete and adequate background.

But on the third point I would lay special stress. The real justification of the maintenance of a school system at public expense is to be found in the contribution that education makes to the development of our common citizenship, using that word in its broadest sense. Large numbers of children are passing through our schools receiving there innumerable reactions flowing out of our current life. The tendency is to place still greater weight upon the importance of the momentary reaction in education. What is going on now in industry, scientific investigation, invention, art, and politics is the thing which must be emphasized and stressed.

In general, one may not take exception to this condition. The flowing current of the daily life provides a richness of educational experience so full that at times it appears one need not look beyond it for educational material for any purpose whatever. Yet how can any thoughtful citizen of the world today disregard the importance of a study of the past experiences of the world? A

people which discards all the lessons which experience has taught, and attempts to defy, even though temporarily, those laws and regulations which, through ages of experimentation, have been proven fundamental in the governance of the industrial, political, and social affairs of men, courts and meets disaster.

In the secondary and higher schools of America, there is the greatest need for America's sake that the youth should have their attention directed to that study of mankind the avenue to which lies in large measure through classical study. Here again I beg to emphasize the obligation resting upon American secondary schools, and here again especially upon American colleges, for vastly increased attention to problems of government and social economy. I believe I could make an adequate defense of an absolute requirement in every American college of a study of the genesis and the development of our American government. That study, however, cannot, as we know, be adequately given unless due attention is paid to the foundations upon which governments rest.

So at once it is clear there is indicated a need of a study of the things which have gone into the making of the nations of many centuries. What is said with reference to government applies with only slightly less force to other fields involving the social relations of the people. There must be a participation of a larger number of our youth in those fundamental studies which make for appreciation and clarity of understanding.

I make no defense of the Classics in secondary education as something preparatory to college. It is fair to exact from each subject in the secondary school, as in any other school, an adequate educational value of the subject itself. Preparation in the narrow sense is a secondary and in some degree an unworthy consideration. But as a means of helping the individual youth to a more complete measure of his development, as a means of opening to him a life of more complete usefulness in a wide variety of vocations, and especially as a means of enriching the service of each generation with the fullness of the experiences of those of the past, the Classics need no defense; they are imperatively needed.